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The Belgian Fascist Parties and Their Para-military Formations

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Summary

1. Immediately after the conquest of Belgium, the German Military Administration dissolved the pro-democratic parties and the Communist party, but allowed four fascist groups to exist in occupied Belgium: the VNV, REX, DEVLAG, and AGRA.

2. The VNV was before the war the most important Flemish Nationalist party. It started in the 1920's with an essentially linguistic platform, adopted totalitarian views when Hitler came to power, and pledged itself to outright collaboration with the invader soon after the occupation.

3. The Rexist party started in 1936 as a purely fascist party with its main following in the French speaking part of the country. Its leader, Léon Degrelle, acclaimed Hitler after the invasion, in the hope of getting a high position in occupied Belgium; he was however sent to the Russian front, together with a group of volunteers whom he had recruited.

4. DEVLAG and AGRA were two minor fascist movements, the former Flemish, the latter Walloon. Under German occupation, they became independent political parties, which tried to outbid the VNV and REX in collaboration.

5. The Germans did not make definite commitments to any of these four groups, but dispensed favors in small doses to each of them, thus exploiting their rivalries and inciting them to a maximum degree of collaboration.

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C. The fascist parties were used to combat resistence of the majority of the Belgians and to furnish volunteers for the German armed forces. Some of their members were given positions in the Belgian administration, but the total number of fascists has decreased throughout the period of occupation.

7. The Belgian underground movements and the Belgian government in exile has prepared lists of leaders and followers of the fascist parties, to facilitate their speedy apprehension and trial.

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THE BELGIAN FASCIST PARTIES AND THEIR PARA-MILITARY FORMATIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

The native fascist parties of Belgium, as in the other countries of Western Europe, have served the Germans first as nuclei for fifth column activity and later, after occupation, as agencies for recruitment and control.

In Belgium several such parties compete for German favor, each hoping to be recognized as the single official party. For a time Germany imitated its policy of 1914-1918 and backed the parties in the northern part of Belgium, where Flemish is spoken. Nationalism in Flanders had become closely linked with fascism; and Flemish nationalist groups which began as linguistic and separatist parties, notably Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond (VNV), tended to adopt totalitarian views after Hitler came into power in Germany. Nazi propaganda had some success in Flanders in the first days of occupation by emphasizing ties of language and "race."

But the Germans soon dropped the exclusively pro-Flemish policy in favor of playing off the parties against each other and thereby spurring each on to outbid the other in their appointed duties of recruiting Belgians for the German Army and of combatting the Belgian resistance. In Wallonia, the French-speaking part of Belgium, the Germans found their principal assistance in Léon Degrelle's Rexist Party.

The Belgian fascists have negligible popular support. In 1936, in the depth of the depression, VNV and the Rexists won almost 20 percent of the seats in the House of Representatives in the general elections. But their parliamentary strength thereafter declined, and their pro-German policy has cost them many followers. Membership in the two minor fascist groups -- DEVLAG and ADRA -- is even smaller. There are also a few free-lance quislings who collaborate without party affiliations. The total number of Belgian fascists is not known, but even a German newspaper has admitted that they constitute "a numerically small minority." In September 1943 the total number of Flemings who had entered the German forces, either the combat forces (Waffen-SS and Kriegsmarine) or the auxiliary services (LSKK and Todt) was estimated at 10,000, and of Walloons at 3,000.

II. VNV (VLAAMSCH NATIONAAL VERBOND)

A. History

The Flemish National League (Vlaamsch National Verbond -- VNV) had its origin in the Front Party, formed by Flemish soldiers during the last war to protest against the suppression of the Flemish language within the Belgian Army. After the war, this party fought for the recognition of Flemish as an official language. In the nineteen-twenties it became the nucleus of the VNV and added certain political planks to its platform, particularly the establishment of an administratively autonomous Flanders within a Belgian federal state. The VNV also developed

the Front Party's opposition to a French alliance and soon became the principal supporter of strict neutrality. After 1933 its ideas showed increasingly the influence of German National Socialism.

In 1929 the VNV had eleven deputies in the House of Representatives, in 1932 eight, but in 1936, as the economic crisis deepened, it gained sixteen and in 1939 seventeen. Still, even in 1939, the party obtained only 185,000 votes, representing less than twelve percent of the Flemish-speaking Belgians. Much of this support, attracted to the party by its championship of Flemish nationalism, abandoned it as its drift toward fascism and collaborationism became increasingly unmistakable.

The extremist wing of the Front Party, calling itself the Verdinaso (Verbond der Vietsch Nationaal Solideristen), became an independent party and preceded the VNV in avowing its fascist character and program.

B. Leadership

On 10 May 1941, the VNV, the Verdinaso and the Rex Vlaanderen, the Flemish wing of the Rexist Party, were amalgamated into the Eenheidsbeweging VNV (United VNV). This combined party was promptly organized on the Nazi model.

The VNV Leader is Hendrik Elias, one of the most outspoken National Socialists in Belgium. A man in his early forties, Elias has a long record of separatist agitation.

After obtaining doctor's degrees in law and philosophy, he was refused an appointment at Louvain University because of his extremist Flemish views. He later entered politics, and from 1941 to February 1943 he held the post of burgomaster of Ghent, which he tried to make the National Socialist headquarters of the new Flanders. On the death in October 1942, of the original VNV Leader, Staf de Clercq, Elias became his successor.

The Leader of the VNV is assisted by the Raad van Leiding (Leadership Council). One of its members is the General Secretary of the party, who is directly responsible to the leader for administering finances and propaganda. In October 1942, the Leadership Council was composed of the General Secretary L. Van den Berghe (burgomaster of Audenaerde), Jan Timmermans (former VNV deputy, alderman, and later acting burgomaster of Greater Antwerp), Leuridan (former VNV deputy), Professor Frans Daels, Professor R. Spaelers, and Odiel Daem (former Rexist and alderman of Greater Antwerp).

C. Regional Organization

Great efforts have been made to set up an elaborate regional organization. The country was divided into six Gouwen (regions) each headed by a Gouwleider. Four of the Gouwen corresponded to Flemish provinces: West Flanders, East Flanders, Antwerp and Limbourg; another Gouw included the Flemish part of Brabant, and a sixth Gouw existed for the Flemings in Wallonia and Northern France.

The Gouwen were divided into Arrondissementen (Regions); each region had one Arrondissements Leider, (Regional leader) and separate political, economic, cultural, and agricultural advisers.

The regions were subdivided into Gewesten (Sections) each headed by a Gewest Leider. The Sections corresponded to communes. In June 1942, 860 sections existed in Flanders and forty in Wallonia.

By June 1943, in centers of over 10,000 inhabitants, most Gewesten were subdivided into Wijken and Blokken (cells). In January 1943, 155 cells existed in Wallonia, of which eighty were in Hainaut, twenty-one in South Brabant, nineteen in Namur, and thirty-five in Liége.

In Northern France, the VNV has a separate sub-organization, the Vlaamsch Verbond Van Frankrijk (Flemish League of France), with headquarters in Lille.

Each Flemish Commune has its Vlaamsch Huis (Flemish House), where the local VNV headquarters and a conference hall are located.

D. Para-military Formations

The Dietsche Militie (Germanic Militia--DM) is the political army of the VNV. At the end of 1943 it had four independent formations, each with its own sphere of activity. The Zwarte Brigade (Black Brigade) could be compared to the German

Storm Troops; the Hulpbrigade (Auxiliary Brigade) performed police duties and directed VNV party demonstrations: the Wachtbrigade was a factory and airport guard; the Motorbrigade was absorbed by the NSKK (National Socialist Driver Corps). On 12 November 1943 these different formations were, with the exception of the Wachtbrigade, merged into one body known as the Dietsche Militie. The Wachtbrigade no longer belongs to the DM, and receives its orders directly from the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe.

At the end of 1943, the DM members were told that to escape labor deportation to Germany they must either pass an examination for the Belgian police and gendarmerie, or sign up for one year with the Hilfsgendarmerie (--), or join the German army. Undoubtedly the Germans have been using the DM as a training ground for their own military formations, especially the Waffen-SS and the Navy.

The DM has, nevertheless, remained the most influential political army in Belgium. Its members live in barracks and are well disciplined though they carry no firearms. They wear black uniforms and high boots. Their functions are essentially political -- protecting party leaders, enforcing police measures against the Jews, organizing parades and demonstrations.

The Vlaamsche Wacht (Flemish Guard), another military formation, guards bridges, railroads, and military installations, acting as an auxiliary to the German army. Most of its members

come from the VNV and belong to the lowest social strata. Many joined the Vlaamsche Wacht in order to qualify for the good pay and to avoid fighting in Russia. They live in barracks and wear old Belgian khaki uniforms, dyed navy blue and trimmed with yellow piping. They are commanded by Flemish non-commissioned and German commissioned officers. Their appearance is much less military than the DK Battalions are stationed at Antwerp, Ghent and Ypern.

E. Youth Movements

The Nationaal Socialistische Jeugd Verbond (National Socialist Youth League -- NSJV) is the youth movement of the VNV. It is directed by a Leader and works in close collaboration with Hitler Youth and the Bund Deutscher Mädel (German Girls' League). Its leaders are trained in Germany, and its members are periodically invited to spend "vacations" there. The real purpose of these invitations is to relieve the farm labor shortage in Germany and to expose the Flemish youth to Nazi indoctrination -- perhaps also to provide the Germans with hostages to be used if necessary against the families in Flanders.

In August 1942, the NSJV Land Service was set up to recruit Flemish youth for agricultural work in the lands seized by Germany from Poland. Recruits were promised that after a training period of four years, including military and labor service, each would be given a farm. In May 1943, fifteen camps in the Warthegau (Western Poland) employed boys working

in the NSJV Land Service. But the total number of Belgian youth in this Service probably has never exceeded 2,000, and even the controlled Flemish press has admitted the failure of this campaign.

The general failure of the NSJV to nazify Flemish youth forced the Germans to take increasingly drastic steps. In October 1943, it was decreed that Flemish boys and girls could become "guest members" of the Hitler Youth. In November 1943, the Germans decided that all Flemish youth must join the Hitler Youth as an integral section of the movement under the name Hitlerjugend Flandern. Like the paramilitary organizations, the youth organizations have moved steadily from nominal independence to incorporation as part of the German machine.

The VNV also has a students' organization. Very little is known about its women's organization, the Vlaamsch Nationaal Vrouwen Verbond (Flemish National Women's League).

F. Press

Volk en Staat (People and Government) has been the official daily paper of the VNV since 1936. In June 1943 its circulation was 1,700 in the Brussels area, and 28,800 in the provinces. (The most important Belgian underground newspaper, La Libre Belgique (Free Belgium), has a circulation of 40,000.)

Some of the less important papers of the party are: De Nationaal Socialist for the NSJV; Ons Vaderland, a monthly

for the Flemings in Wallonia, with a circulation of 5,000 in December 1942; and two papers for the Flemings in Northern France: the daily La Vie du Nord and the bilingual monthly Le Lion de Flandre.

C. Party Strength

While the VNV obtained 185,000 votes in 1939, only 100,000 members were claimed for the whole unified VNV movement in September 1942. In January 1943, Elias boasted of a membership of 200,000, but according to less biased sources, the party has been in a process almost of disintegration since late 1943, as a result largely of the German military setbacks. In some towns two-thirds of the members are known to have resigned. Antwerp, however, continues as a stronghold of the VNV.

The VNV considers French Flanders as Flemish territory, because 250,000 French residents and 50,000 Belgian immigrants speak Flemish. But the VNV in France had, in December 1943, a membership of only 300.

The number of party officials in Flanders which on 1 October 1941 was 2,051 persons, had climbed to 3,661 by 30 April 1942. Vigorous efforts are continually being made to promote the formation of VNV cells in all public and semi-public bodies.

D. Propaganda and Its Effects

During the German occupation, the VNV has followed two divergent propaganda lines. In order to obtain German favor

the leaders proclaimed Hitler as the Führer of all Germanic peoples and pictured a National Socialist Europe under German hegemony as essential for the future of Flanders. At the same time, in order to attract Flemish support, the VNV leaders have emphasized that German victory would not mean the absorption of Flanders by the Reich but would rather be the safest guarantee of Flemish autonomy.

The VNV has failed to achieve either of these aims. It has succeeded neither in obtaining a privileged position from the Germans, such as that enjoyed by the NSB in the Netherlands, nor in winning over the Flemish masses. In January 1943, Elias confessed: "It is sad that the majority of the Flemings are hostile to the V.N.V." According to his own count, 118 VNV members had been assassinated in 1942 and 1943.

I. VNV under the German Administration

The Germans have allowed VNV members to play an important but not predominant role in the central and local administrations. Of the ten General Secretaries, who took over the functions of former Cabinet Ministers, only two are VNV men: Victor Leemans, Secretary General for Economic Affairs, and Gerard Romsee, Secretary General of the Interior. The Interior secretariat, however, has been the most important Belgian post under the German military administration, and Romsee has been the only collaborator whom the Germans have entrusted with broad political powers. With authority over the gendarmerie, public health, food

and price control and the "reform" of local government, Romsee has been a conspicuously faithful tool of the Germans.

Other prominent V.V members in the central administration are J. F. Hendricks, one of the most efficient and unscrupulous collaborationists, who, as head of the Labor Office since 1940, has been a zealous recruiting agent for forced labor in Germany; Borgignon, former V.V deputy from the Brussels district, appointed Commissioner for Larger Urban Units in order to promote quisling local governments; Cyriel Verschaeve, President of the Nazi-sponsored Flemish Cultural Council, a gifted Flemish poet and one of the few Belgian Catholic priests to go over to the Germans; Dr. August Borms, whose pro-German record goes back to 1914-1918.

In local administration, the Governors of three provinces, West Flanders, East Flanders and Limburg, as well as many Romsee appointed bourgomasters and other local officials in Flanders and Brabant, are V.V members. Two notable exceptions, however, are the new bourgomasters of the two most important cities, Greater Brussels and Greater Antwerp who do not belong to any of the Fascist groups.

III. REX

A. Pre-war Rex Party

The leader of the Rexist movement is Léon Degrelle, a veteran agitator. He first came to public notice in 1936 when, by attacking big business and the democratic regime at a time of economic crisis, he appealed powerfully to the lower middle

class Walloons. The Rexist Party in the elections of that year carried twenty-one of the 202 seats in the Chamber, largely at the expense of the Catholic Party. Of these twenty-one deputies, twelve were from the Walloon provinces (Liége, Hainaut, Namur, and Luxembourg); six from the bilingual provinces of Brabant; and only three from Flanders (Antwerp and East Flanders). The Flemish section of the party, which was called Rex Vlaanderen, was unimportant.

It soon became obvious that the Rexist ideology was modelled on foreign brands of fascism, especially the Italian. It has since been revealed that in 1936 and 1937 Degrelle received large sums from Mussolini. These connections with the totalitarian countries, the repudiation of the party by the Catholic Church, and the improvement of the economic situation, all account for the rapid decline of the movement. The year after the 1936 elections Degrelle was overwhelmingly defeated in a Brussels by-election by Paul van Zeeland, the Premier. At the general elections of 1939 the Rexists lost seventeen of their twenty-one seats, barely polling 100,000 votes.

D. Léon Degrelle

The Rexist Party is to a considerable extent a projection of the personality of its leader, Léon Degrelle. Just under forty years of age, Degrelle has a long career of political agitation, first for the Catholic Party and later as a free-

lance demagogue. An unsuccessful religious periodical called Rex (abbreviation of Christus Rex), which he published in 1932, provided the name for the party which he founded in 1936. A confident and effective public speaker, boastful, loud, and unscrupulous, Degrelle won great political notoriety, though after his defeat by van Zeeland few took his movement very seriously.

On the day of the German invasion, Degrelle was arrested and deported to France. Set free after the French armistice, he returned to Belgium and swore allegiance to Hitler. The Germans, apparently having at first a low opinion of his usefulness, sent him to the Russian front as a private together with a group of Rexist volunteers which he had recruited. Since then Degrelle has been shuttling back and forth between Russia and Belgium. In the meantime, he has been promoted step by step until he is now a major in the German Army.

In February 1944, when the Walloon Legion faced annihilation in the Korson pocket, Degrelle escaped the fate of his comrades and was taken by plane to Hitler's headquarters, decorated, and given a prominent role in German propaganda all over Europe. He spoke at German-sponsored meetings in Berlin, Brussels, and Paris. It appeared as if the Germans had decided to single him out as Belgian quisling-in-chief.

C. Organization

Whenever Degrelle is at the Russian front, the direction of the Rexist Party is taken over by Victor Matthys, who

then assumes the title of Chief of Rex ad interim. Matthys directs a political bureau, an economic department, and a department dealing with labor questions and cultural matters. He is also chief of the Rexist para-military and youth organizations. The head of the political bureau is José Streel, who is also the political director of the party newspaper Le Pays Reel and correspondent of the largest Belgian New Order paper, Le Soir.

While the VNV maintains an important organization for the Flemings in Wallonia, the Rexists, by an agreement of 10 May 1941, had to surrender all rights to carry on political activities in Flanders. The Rexist Party's domain is limited to Wallonia, where it is divided into twenty-eight Cercles (Districts), each headed by a Chef de Cercle (District Leader).

D. Armed Forces

1. Para-military. Following the example of the VNV, Degrelle tried to form a political army, the Formations de Combat de Rex (Rexist Combat Formations -- FC). The FC never gave promise of being a success, and by July 1942 most of its limited membership had gone to the Russian Front or enlisted in the Garde Wallonne (Walloon Guard).

The Garde Wallonne is a home guard like the Vlaamsche Wacht. The Walloon Guards wear the same uniforms as the Vlaamsche Wacht, but with red piping on their caps. The organization exists independently of the Rexist Party, but its members have been recruited from Rexist ex-servicemen of the two wars. In

November 1943, the Germans disarmed the Third Company of the Walloon Guard at Mons, because they suspected that patriots had infiltrated the unit. In other districts, the Germans considerably reduced the ammunition issued to Guards detailed to protect factories against sabotage.

2. Police. According to reports of November 1943, there is also a secret police force of the Rexist Party, with seventy agents in Brussels and fourteen in Liége, all members of the Gestapo. By agreement with the Germans, Rexist police are allowed to attack patriots without fear of judicial action. In November 1943, the political department of the Rexist Party urged its members born in 1920 and 1921 to enroll in a special corps to assist the Feldgendarmerie in raids against patriots.

3. Military. The Rexist Walloon Legion was created to fight on the Russian front, first as an independent unit, then, since the spring of 1943, within the Waffen-SS as the SS-Freiwilligen Brigade Wallonien. Degrelle himself admitted at the end of 1943 there were only 187 survivors out of 1,275 volunteers who had gone to Russia since August 1941. The Soviet communique of 19 February 1944 claimed the Brigade's complete annihilation in the Korson pocket.

H. Youth and Women's Organizations

The party has a separate women's organization, called Femmes Rexistes (Rexist Women--FR) and a youth movement, reorganized in April 1943 as Jeunesse Legionnaire (Young Legionnaires--JL).

The leadership of the JL has been given to Mazzetta, former Feldwebel (sergeant) in the Walloon Legion. The JL tried to organize all Walloon boys and girls between the ages of eight and eighteen, but in September 1942 it claimed a membership of only 3,000. They receive such special advantages as free uniforms, special food, and the use of sports fields. In November 1943 the JL organized a separate girls' section, Jeunesse Feminine (Girls Youth Movement -- JF). At the same time, the JL opened a training school for its youth leaders at Marcinelle. Candidates must be between sixteen and twenty-six years of age and must join the JL if they are not already members. Those who pass the final examination are sent to a Hitler Youth Camp for one month, after which they become youth leaders in Belgium. In February 1944, the JL opened its own elementary schools for children whose parents belong to New Order movements.

F. Press

Since the foundation of the Rexist Party in 1936, the daily newspaper Le Pays Reel has been its mouthpiece. Le Pays Reel started with a circulation of 100,000 (as against the 5,000 of Volk en Staat, the VNV paper). In 1941 the circulation figure was only 20,000, and by June 1943, it had fallen to 5,000. These figures illustrate the steady decline of the Rexist movement.

G. Policy and Influence

Like the VNV, the Rexist Party has attempted in its propaganda to combine praise of Nazi Germany with appeals to

local patriotism. On the one hand, Degrelle calls the Walloons "French-speaking Germanics"; on the other, he declares his intention to protect the unity of the Belgian people under King Leopold from the menace of Bolshevism.

The present number of Rexists is not known. Most estimates are in the neighborhood of 5,000, a figure which obviously does not include sympathizers. The total within the Rexist sphere of influence is undoubtedly much smaller than the number of V.V supporters, and the Rexists have been much less successful in holding their membership together. Discipline is bad; members are not seldom expelled or reprimanded for insubordination.

Unlike the V.V, the Rexists have little share in the central administration. Their only top post is the unimportant Sports Commissariat, held by Pierre Daye, former Rexist deputy. The governors of two provinces, Liége and Hainault, are Rexists, and a small number have been made burgomasters and aldermen.

The numerous attacks on party members testify to the widespread popular hostility toward the Rexist movement. Like the VNV, the Rexists have had to cope with the increasing hostility of the Catholic Church. Most of the clergy now refuses to say mass for Rexists wearing the party uniform or emblems. The Church's fight against Rexism, which started before the war, culminated in Degrelle's excommunication by the Bishop of Namur in September 1943. As an officer in the German Army, Degrelle was able to appeal to the German chaplaincy, and received a

decision in his favor.

IV. DEVLAG

The Duitsch Vlaamsche Arbeidsgemeenschap (German Flemish League -- DEVLAG) was founded in 1935 by a group of Flemish and German students as a cultural organization. It has been developed under German occupation into an independent political party, active both in Flanders and in Germany.

A. Activities in Flanders

Jef van de Wiele is the leader of DEVLAG in Belgium. He is closely associated with a number of intellectuals, including Professor Van Roosbroeck, German-appointed professor at Ghent University and an alderman of Greater Antwerp. In September 1943, van de Wiele claimed that his organization had 51,991 members, a staff of 3,224, and 530 cells.

DEVLAG's principal activity in Flanders is sponsoring meetings, movies, plays, lectures, concerts, and exhibitions intended to convert the Flemings to National Socialism. DEVLAG arranged for the visit of 20,000 Flemish children to Germany in 1941 and 1942. It also carries on its own recruiting campaign for the Waffen-SS and especially for the NSKK(National Socialist Transport Corps). In September 1943, its leader stated that seventy-two DEVLAG members had fallen on the Russian front, a statement which suggests that DEVLAG volunteers cannot have been very numerous.

B. Activities in Germany

DEVLAG has organized Flemish-German "culture weeks" in

different German cities and has invited Flemish writers such as Timmermans, Verschaeve, and De Pillecijn to give lectures in Germany. In this way, the party attempted to impress the Germans with the "Germanic" character of Flemish culture. Its activities in Germany have also been aimed at the Flemish workers deported under the labor draft. The movement maintains sections in Berlin, Düsseldorf, Köln, Essen, Münster, Hamburg, Lübeck, Lüneburg, Bremen, Stuttgart, and the Sudetenland. DEVLAG has arranged lectures and entertainments and has taken part in the publication of a Flemish newspaper in Germany, De Vlaamsche Post (the Flemish Post). SS-Obergruppenfuehrer Berger is in charge of DEVLAG in Germany.

C. Relationship between DEVLAG and VNV

After the VNV had incorporated the smaller Flemish Nationalist groups within its own framework, DEVLAG, the only remaining fascist group in Flanders, became the rival of VNV. It tried to outdo the latter in loyalty to Germans by advocating the annexation of Flanders to the Reich and making all its officials swear allegiance to Hitler. DEVLAG also instigated the absorption of the VNV Youth Movement and its own youth organization by the Hitler Youth.

The VNV resented the competition of this more outspoken Flemish movement, and constant frictions between the two rival moments led Elias to expel, at the beginning of 1944, all members of VNV who also belonged to DEVLAG. The Germans

at first stood aloof from these quarrels. However, since 1943 DEVLAG has been gaining German confidence at the expense of the V.V.

In March 1944 when the Germans suddenly shifted their backing to the Rex Party, DEVLAG and the V.V shelved their differences and made a common appeal for unity to all Flemings. Apparently the two competitors were trying to unite their efforts to prevent Degrelle, the Rex leader, from becoming head of all Belgian Nazi parties. Other sources believe, however, that his sudden desire for unity between the two Flemish fascist parties was ordered by the German authorities.

V. AGRA

The AGRA (Amis du Grand Reich Allemand - Friends of the Greater German Reich) is an organization bearing the same

onship to Rex as DEVLAG to V.V, but its importance is almost negligible. The movement was founded in Liege on 13 March 1941 as a "society of political culture." In its attempt to appeal to the Walloon workers it changed its name in October 1942 to Mouvement Socialiste Walloon. Its leader is Georges Scaillet, with headquarters at Charleroi, where the movement has two local newspapers: Le Journal de Charleroi and La Gazette de Charleroi. Two other newspapers, La Legia in Liége and La Province de Namur also support the movement.

This group has gone much further than the Rexists in its adherence to National Socialism. It has called the creation of Belgium in 1830 a mistake, and stands for the integration of

the "Celto-Germanic tribe" of the Walloons into the German Reich--whether or not detached from Flanders. It has carried out recruiting campaigns for the German forces, and by August 1942 had succeeded in enlisting seventy men into the Waffen-SS and six hundred truck-drivers for the NSKK. It has constantly opposed the Rexist attempt to create a single Walloon party.

VI. FASCIST PARTIES DURING AND AFTER LIBERATION

A. During the Combat Period

The Germans intend to use Belgian fascists of fighting age, who have not been sent to the Eastern front, against the Allies in the West. They undoubtedly have issued orders to the militarized formations to continue fighting the Allies even behind the front lines, as guerrillas, saboteurs, spies, or fifth columnists. Victor Matthys, in his 1944 New Years Day message to the Rexist Party said, "If our country were to serve as an invasion ground for the enemies of Europe ... it would be our duty to take part in the battle. The militarized formations in this country would not think of foregoing this honor." The chief of DEVLAG announced shortly afterwards, "The first thing to do is to put on the uniform of the Fuehrer's soldiers, the SS uniform, and then carry out his orders." A statement of the VNV leader could be interpreted in a similar way: "Our movement will not disappear tomorrow, even if we ourselves should disappear. I am resolved to go on fighting whatever may happen,

whatever shadows may fall upon us, whatever reverses may be in store for us."

Some of the most compromised quislings will follow the instructions of their German masters, in the belief that they can avert an Allied victory. But most likely, the general process of disintegration of the fascist movements will continue, once the Allies face Germans on Belgian soil.

B. After the Liberation

The fascists have already made plans to save their position in liberated Belgium. The VNV is supposed, according to some reports, to have laid plans to present the Allies with a political fait accompli by trying to rally around King Leopold, launching a campaign against DEVLAG as pro-German and seeking to represent itself as the only organized "pro-Allied" party in the country. Other groups, especially the Rexists, doubtless have similar plans. Degrelle may well try to save his position by capitalizing on his former appeals to Belgian patriotic and monarchical sentiments.

But the Belgian underground and the Belgian Government in London have prepared lists of persons connected with the fascist groups or otherwise engaged in traitorous activity. With their help it will be possible to recognize and to try the fascist and pro-German elements.